

Message Text

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11
ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

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P R 300952Z JAN 74
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 699
INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC

SECRET MANILA 1114

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, MARR, MOPS, RP, CH
SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE POSITION WITH RESPECT TO SPRATLEY SILANDS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

REF: A. STATE 17663 B. MANILA 1038 C. MANILA 859 D. MANILA 858
E. TAIPEI 508

1. DURING COURSE OF SECRETARY INGERSOLL'S CALLS UPON
PRESIDENT MARCOS AND FONSEC ROMULO DECEMBER 30, ISSUE
OF SPRATLEY ISLANDS WAS RAISED AT FILIPINO INITIATIVE.
ROMULO OPENED SUBJECT BY STATING HIS GOVERNMENT'S
DISAPPOINTMENT THAT UN SECURITY COUNCIL HAD FAILED
TO TAKE ACTION ON PARACELS RESPONSIVE TO GVN REQUEST. HE ALSO
INDICATED UNHAPPINESS WITH U.S. POSITION REGARDING GVN
APPROACH TO SEATO COUNCIL. SECRETARY INGERSOLL AND I
EXPLAINED U.S. POSTURE IN BOTH THESE COUNCILS AND ROMULO
LET MATTER DROP AT THAT POINT (HE SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD ME
AT LUNCHEON THAT, DESPITE PHIL ATTITUDE, THEY WOULD NOT
OPPOSE U.S. POSITION IN SEATO COUNCIL BUT WOULD PROBABLY
ABSTAIN IF THE SUBJECT IS PUT TO A VOTE).

2. JUST PRIOR TO OUR MEETING WITH ROMULO, HE SENT
SECRET

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ME STILL ANOTHER AIDE MEMOIRE ON THE SUBJECT OF THOSE
ISLANDS IN AND NEAR THE SPRATLEY GROUP OCCUPIED BY
FILIPINO FORCES. TEXT OF THIS AIDE MEMOIRE IS BEING SENT
SEPTEL. ITS ARGUMENT IS BASED ON CONTENTION THAT THE ISLANDS

ON WHICH PHIL MILITARY UNITS HAVE BEEN STATIONED ARE NEW CORAL AND VOLCANIC OUTCROPPINGS WHICH WERE NOT HISTORICALLY PART OF THE SPRATLEY GROUP AND THEREFORE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED RES NULLIUS. WE SAID WE WOULD LIKE TO EXAMINE THE FACTS HISTORICALLY AND CARTOGRAPHICALLY BEFORE BEING ABLE TO COMMENT ON THIS PROPOSITION.

3. IN SUBSEQUENT CALL ON MARCOS, PRESIDENT PRODUCED LARGE MAP SHOWING DISPOSITION OF PHIL MILITARY FORCES ON THE ISLANDS IN QUESTION AND RAISED ONCE AGAIN THE "TURSTEESHIP" ISSUE WHICH HAD BEEN DISCUSSED IN REF D. I DREW UPON DEPARTMENT'S COMMENTS IN REF A TO INDICATE THAT U.S. DID NOT RPT NOT SHARE PHIL INTERPRETATION ON THIS POINT. MARCOS DID NOT PURSUE THAT ARGUMENT IN DETAIL.

4. HE DID, HOWEVER, SURPRISE US BY TELLING US THAT HE WAS ARRANGING TO WITHDRAW ALL PHIL MILITARY FORCES FROM THESE ISLANDS AND TO REPLACE THEM BY A HANDFUL OF CIVILIANS WHO WOULD MAN WEATHER MONITORING STATIONS IN THE SAME LOCATIONS. SECDEF ENRILE SUBSEQUENTLY INFORMED ME THAT THIS ACTION WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED "WITHIN THE NEXT FEW DAYS" AND THAT THE CIVILIANS WOULD BE TECHNICIANS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF FEFENSE WHO WOULD REMAIN ON THE ISLANDS AND ATOOLS FOR THE PURPOSE OF SHOWING THE FILIPINO FLAG THERE.

5. THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION WITH MARCOS AND SUBSEQUENTLY WITH ENRILE, BOTH EVIDENCED CONSIDERABLE CONCERN ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF A PRC ATTACK AGAINST THE ISLAND OF ITU ABA WHICH IS OCCUPIED BY GRC FORCES (REF E). SINCE THIS ISLAND IS RELATIVELY CLOSE TO PALAWAN, THE PHILS FEAR THAT SUCH A CLASH WOULD NOT ONLY CAUSE CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO THE FILIPINO PUBLIC BUT WOULD ALSO INTRODUCE THE PROSEPT OF A PRC PRESENCE NEAR THE PALAWAN TERRITORIAL SHELF WHERE INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES ARE CURRENTLY DRILLING IN PETROLEUM EXPLORATION.

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6. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT AT NO TIME THROUGHOUT THESE DISCUSSIONS DID FILIPINOS EVER RAISE THE ISSUE OF THE U.S.-PHIL MUTUAL DEFENSE TREATY. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A CONSISTENTLY UNSTATED IMPLICATION THAT U.S. SHOULD HAVE SOME MILITARY CONCERN ABOUT PRC ADVANCE INTO SHIPPING CHANNELS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, THIS WAS NEVER EXPLICITLY STATED IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S. DEFENSE RESPONSIBILITIES. WE NATURALLY REFRAINED FROM INTRODUCING THE SUBJECT IN THAT FRAMEWORK.

7. THERE WAS, HOWEVER, A SPECIFIC STATEMENT BY MARCOS THAT THE "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY" AND "THE ALLIED POWERS WHO MADE THE PEACE TREATY WITH JAPAN" SHOULD

ASSUME SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ULTIMATE INTERNATIONAL
DISPOSITION OF THESE VARIOUS ISLANDS AMONG THE CONTENDING
CLAIMANTS. OUR ONLY COMMENT ON THIS MATTER WAS TO
REVIEW THE ACTION TAKEN IN THE SAN FRANCISCO TREATY OF
PEACE WITH JAPAN AND TO POINT OUT THAT TREATY HAD
LEFT THE RESOLUTION OF THESE CLAIMS UNRESOLVED. WE WENT
ON TO STATE THAT THE U.S. TOOK NO POSITION WITH RESPECT
TO THE VALIDITY OF THE VARIOUS CLAIMS.

SULLIVAN

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